



Sapphire Mirrors of the French Riviera

*self guided tour
Luggage transport
by your own personal donkey*





Family holidays in Provence, Mercantour national park

High mountain altitudes ranging from 1200 - 3000m

Type of holidays : Self guided tour, luggage transport by donkey

Duration: 7 days 6 nights

Season: 1st of June to 25 september

Level: Family friendly with children aged 5 and above

Prices for 2021 : Adult (option gîte) : 675€ (extra option private room : 70€/person).

Children aged 5 to 12 years old : 575€ (extra option private room : 70€/person).

Path conditions

Very well signposted and marked with easily distinguishable yellow rectangles. They do, however, remain mountain paths.

Accommodation

Family rooms in auberge , gites, mountain refuge. This includes full board. You only need to bring sheet sleeping bags (less bulky than duvets or sleeping bags), as warm blankets are provided throughout the trek. Equally, there are showers in each lodging (bring your own towel).



Trek departure : *Villeplane*. Every day according to availability from 01/06/2020 to 25/09/2020.

Trek arrival : *Estenc*, 50km / one hour by car from Villeplane, where we will pick you up.

Family friendly Trek

The easy options throughout this trek enable you to enjoy a week of relaxed walking where the children can be involved; the itinerary has been planned for families with children aged 5 and up. The walking time per day varies between 3 - 6 hours, and the ascent levels between 350 m - 600 m.

Level: easy, trails clearly marked

Climate : due to the proximity of the Mediterranean Sea, the weather is warm and sunny, ideal for summer hiking.



Wolf are you there?

This journey is full of variety. Through the foot-hills and the fragrance of Provence and up to the alpine panoramas of the Mercantour National Park. From the oak to the larch; from the wheat fields to the gentian lawns; from a man-made landscape to a sweeping scenery of wilderness.

The last two days are a grandiose conclusion to the trip - with a good general idea of high mountain conditions and Europe's largest glacial lake. Marmots, chamois and golden eagles will be there to meet you! A wolf may observe you from afar, too fearful to draw near.

Your donkey

A donkey is docile and easy to lead, but is not a mountain bike! Each one has different reactions according to their personality: cuddly, curious, gourmand, drama queen, endearing... he knows how to get your child to keep going!

It is important for you to know that all our donkeys work 2 months in the year, and for the rest of the time they are on holiday! Roaming free in 400 hectares, where we pamper them from autumn to summer.



Day by day programme

Day 1 : around Villeplane

Welcome at 8.30 at the farm of Villeplane. Our local guide will assess the various possibilities together, taking into consideration the weather forecast, your physical abilities and of course will show you how to handle your donkey.

We offer a lovely, relaxing half-day hike, far from everything. The top of the Collet peak offers a 360 degree vista of all the peaks of the valley.

Day 2 : Villeplane / Saint Martin d'Entraunes

This fairly long hike borrows an ancestral path connecting villages between them. It will impregnate you with the wilderness charm of our mountains and their 2500 meter sommets cutting through the blue of the sky, punctuated by small hamlets perched with their walls made of dry stones, shaded forests and amusing halts in the pools of refreshing torrents.



Day 3 : Saint Martin d'Entraunes/Val-Pelens

Option 1 : A short, peaceful connecting link to your next destination which will allow you to 'tantalise' the high mountain altitude at your own rhythm.

Extra option

if the children are tired, you could split into two groups, one staying at the auberge and the other climbing the beautiful, mineral summit of the Clot de l'Aï

Day 4: Val-Pelens/Entraunes

Option 1 : A stunning trek, travelling through ancient country living sites, sparing a thought for these generations of mountain folk who covered the foreground, in order to find the best area.

Option 2 : A remarkable trek towards the vast alpine landscapes of the mountain pass of Champs, meeting marmots along your way and what is more, an open panorama over the hautes vallées. You will be stunned by the power of the dense, vertical waterfalls awaiting you towards the end of your day.



Day 5 : Entraunes/Estenc

Walking up through the village, you will follow a pretty path along the bed of the impressive Var river, between towering cliffs, and across the footbridges over the torrent of Garréton, Aiglière and the Var, with their impressive vertical falls!

Day 6: Estenc/Col de la Cayolle

Option 1 : An ascent which progresses in altitude up a beautiful path through a centennial larch tree forest to the timberline (edge of inhospitable climate), where you emerge to find high mountain pastures and the charming mountain range of Sanguinière with its wild scenery, typical of the contrast and diverse southern Alps.

Option 2 : Typically alpine, deep into the Mercantour park, this itinerary combines all the attractive elements of a high mountain environment: Panoramic mountain passes, barren ravines, gnarled larch and prancing chamois.



Day 7: Col de la Cayolle/Estenc

Option 1 :your weeks trek rounds off in a climax with an enchanted tour around the glacial lakes of Allos, Garrets and la petite Cayolle. You will lose yourself on this journey through nature, where the blue sky is reflected in the clear waters of the lakes and the endemic flora strewn with alpine pastures: Alonie bluebell, wooly Berardie, Koch gentians, acaulescent catchflies, vanilla orchids, pansies ..

Option 2: if you are a keen mountain-goer, you will not be able to leave the region without climbing the Mont Pelat (3050m), the highest local summit. A mountaintop whose name is etymologically transparent, it's flanks of barren rockslides cut across the blue sky. The tradition is to reach the summit at the rising of the sun and, on a clear day, enjoy this majestic 360° view: To the south, Corsica; a faint shadow on the liquid horizon, to the north, the distant Mont Blanc glistening white, and to the east, the Italian and Swiss Alps. You will be picked up and driven back to Villeplane at 5pm.



How to reach us

By Plane : To Nice airport.

Airport Bus Services : (depart from terminal 1)
For the Train station 'Gare SNCF'

By Mountain Train : Nice – Entrevaux

From the mountain train station 'Gare des chemins de fer de Provence' (not the 'Gare SNCF') There are 2 appropriate Micheline trains a day:
Please notify us if you are arriving at Entrevaux by the mountain train and we will arrange your 45 mins transfer to Villeplane (45€ per group).

By Coach : Nice – Guillaumes

From « Nice Wilson », bus station in Nice centre. (N.B.! There is one bus a day).

Please notify us if you are arriving at Guillaumes by coach, and we will arrange your 30 mins transfer to Villeplane (25€ per group).

By Car :

From Nice : Less than 2 hrs drive following directions for 'Digne'(right) up through the stunning Gorges de Daluis.

From Digne-les-bains : 95 km drive, heading southeast to Barreme, then east to St.André les Alpes and Les Scafarels. 7 km east of Annot, head north again up the Gorges de Daluis.

From Barcelonette : Come over Col de Cayolle (2326 m) and down past Entraunes



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